

VZCZCXRO9162  
PP RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK  
DE RUEHBC #0008/01 0531121  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 221121Z FEB 09  
FM REO BASRAH  
TO RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD PRIORITY 0412  
RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0829  
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE  
RUEHBC/REO BASRAH 0866

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BASRAH 000008

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2/22/2019  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: LOSING POLITICAL ENTITIES CRY FOUL

REF: BASRAH 0007

BASRAH 00000008 001.2 OF 002

CLASSIFIED BY: Mark O'Connor, Deputy Director, Regional Embassy  
Office Basrah, Department of State.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

[11.](#) (C) Summary: Representatives from 15 different political entities requested a ballot recount during a February 10 press conference in Basra. Among other complaints, the representatives asserted a discrepancy between the preliminary election results announced by the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) and those calculated by the individual parties present. REO discussed the issue with Provincial Council (PC) candidates Sayid Bahaa Jawad and Awadh Al Abdan, as well as Basra Governorate Electoral Office (GEO) Director Hazim Jodah. While Bahaa and Abdan strongly implied malfeasance, Jodah confidently rebuffed the suggestion. End summary.

Losing Parties Contest the Results  
-----

[12.](#) (C) Following the February 10 press conference in which 15 different political entities contested preliminary election results, Sayid Bahaa Jawad explained to the REO on February 11 the nature of the complaints. Bahaa said that the figures released by IHEC on February 5 did not match the figures he had extrapolated from reports made by his observers on election day. Bahaa, a current PC member and candidate for "The Gathering of Good and National Reform" coalition (394), suggested that the totals reported to IHEC Baghdad did not reflect the actual votes in the ballot boxes. Bahaa, suspecting malfeasance, spearheaded the press conference calling for a recount.

[13.](#) (C) Bahaa described IHEC as being "too politicized" and speculated that fraud had likely taken place in the evening when ballot boxes were opened. At that time, he continued, most of the observers had gone home. He said that with just 700 observers, it was impossible for his party to monitor the 3,500 polling stations across the province.

[14.](#) (C) Bahaa provided the REO with a copy of a letter signed by 15 representatives from various political entities and addressed to the citizens of Basra. The letter stipulated that IHEC preliminary figures were incorrect and called for a ballot recount in the presence of UN observers. The letter also complained that many voters had been disenfranchised - the result of names either not appearing on the voter registration list or varying slightly from the name on record. The letter also pointed out that IHEC had not provided political entities with official election results as is required by law.

Sunni Party Also Suspects Fraud  
-----

[15.](#) (C) Awadh Al Abdan, National Dialogue Front Branch Chief, made a similar complaint to the REO on February 15. Abdan, whose party was also signatory to the letter, echoed allegations

of election fraud. He argued that approximately 70,000 Sunnis voted in the provincial election, yet votes for the two "Sunni" entities -- the Iraqi Islamic Party and the Iraqi National Project Gathering (149) -- totaled far less than that number according to the IHEC figures. Scoffing at suggestions that some Sunnis may have cast their ballots for another entity, Abdan declared that "Sunnis would not vote for other parties." The announcement that the "Al Shahid Al Mihrab List and Independent Power" coalition (290) had won 11 percent of the vote also raised a red flag with Abdan, who described Basrawis as "97 - 98 percent secular."

#### GEO Director Rebuts Charges

-----

16. (C) On February 11, Basra Governorate Electoral Office (GEO) Director Hazim Joda retorted that it was too early to challenge IHEC's figures and that objections would be heard only after official results had been released. Meeting at the REO, he also pointed out that not one of the representatives at the press conference had filed an official complaint with IHEC or had even identified a specific wrongdoing. Jodah emphasized the difficulty of tampering with the election results. He remarked that IHEC had issued 49,700 badges to political observers in Basra to cover 3,673 polling stations -- averaging close to 14 observers per station. He said observers watched the count and did not complain at the time. Regarding the issue of disenfranchised voters, Jodah blamed the individuals themselves for failing to verify their voter registration information during last year's registration drive. (See reftel.)

17. (C) Jodah parried Abdan's Sunni concerns by explaining that IHEC had paid particular attention to the major Sunni areas of Abul Khasib and Zubayr, where he hired an 80 to 90 percent Sunni staff to work the polls. Jodah disclosed that as his mother is Sunni, he is consequently also considered to be Sunni and that this is well known within those communities.

18. (C) Comment: The argument promulgated at the press conference relies on anecdotal evidence and is very weak. It is

BASRAH 00000008 002.2 OF 002

noteworthy that no specific examples of fraud have been identified and that nearly all of the 15 political entities participating in the conference failed to gain at least 3 percent of the vote. Absent verifiable evidence to the contrary, complaints of fraud appear to be the venting of frustration at having failed to win a seat on the PC. Hazim Jodah has done a superb job as the GEO Director and the apparent lack of public interest in this issue illustrates Basrawis' general satisfaction with his performance and the election results. End comment.  
O'CONNOR